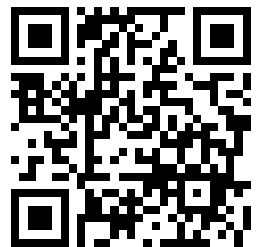

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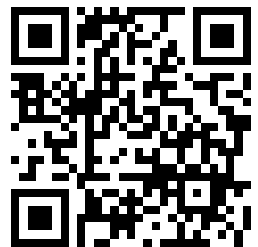
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CONFESSION IN THE DIALOGUS MIRACU-
LORUM OF CAESAR OF HEISTERBACH

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CONFESSION IN THE DIALOGUS MIRACULORUM OF

CAESAR OF HEISTERBACH

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF

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**Confession in the Dialogus Miraculorum of
Caesar of Heisterbach.**

I.

Caesar of Heisterbach finds the basis of confession in the Bible. He says it is called a sacrament in the Old Testament, though he nowhere in the Dialogus defines what he means by sacrament. To him, it is clearly prefigured in Scripture, established by injunction, and confirmed by examples.* Thus, the leper is declared clean or unclean at will by the priest under the Levitical system. The Saviour commands a leper healed by him : "Vade ostende te sacerdoti."** David in the Psalms, is witness to the verbal injunction to confess. For is it not written there:" Confitemini Domino quoniam bonus," *** and also, "Revela Domino viam tuam?" **** Isaiah also commands confession: "Dic tu iniquitates tuas, ut instificeris." ⁵ These scriptural injunctions are confirmed by David, after his sin with Bathsheba, when he said to Nathan: "Peccavi Domino."⁶

*Caesarii Heisterbacensis Dialogus Miraculorum. Ed.Strange. Coloniae, Bonnae et Bruxellis. 1851. Dial.III,1, 111.

** Matt. VIII, 4

*** Psal. CV, 1.

**** Psal. XXXVI, 5.

⁵ Isa. XLIII, 26.

⁶ Reg. II, 12,13. Dial. III, 1, 111.

The purpose of confession was to have the sinner unbare his hidden diseases of the soul or sins, so that those forces by which he could be healed might operate more effectually.* Thus, though perfect love destroyed both the guilt and punishment of sin, as fire destroys straw, yet all had not such redeeming love, and therefore, it was well not to slight confession.** For confession often caused profound shame, and this was the greatest part of penance. First, through the impulse of contrition guilt was remitted, then the soul aglow with contrition, was moved to confession by which punishment was removed.*** Caesar illustrates this by the story of the Parisian Scholar who had committed such great sins that shame prevented him from confessing.**** At length, terrified at the prospects of hell fire, and considering the blessings of eternal life, he decided to confess to the Prior. But, when he wished to confess, his contrition was so great that he was unable to utter a word. So, the Prior made him write his confession on a tablet. When the latter read the list of sins, he was astounded at the enormity of them, and said that he must refer him to

* Dial. III, 1, 110.

** Dial. II, 10, 76.

*** Dial. II, 10, 77.

**** Dial. II, 10, 75.

the Abbot. When the Abbot wished to read the tablet, he found nothing written on it. The contrition of the student was so great that God remitted his guilt immediately, and confirmed the remission by the erasure of the writing on the tablet. Thus, says Caesar, was fulfilled what the Lord says in Isaiah : "Delevi ut nubem iniquitatem, et ut nebulam peccata tua."* Caesar thinks, that if the student had died in this contrite state, he would not have gone to Purgatory. But, when the Novice asks, why the student's sins were not destroyed before the writing was shown to the Abbot, Caesar replies: "Ne superflua videretur confessio, sine cuius desiderio nulla fit remissio."** But, when called upon to say which is greater, contrition or confession, he declares that the former is, by which the guilt of the sinner is remitted, but only on this condition, that contrition is followed by confession.*** For, confession is the sign of contrition.**** Without the firm desire to confess, contrition is incomplete and worthless. Furthermore, confession is of such extreme importance and value, that by the mere wish to confess, though its fulfillment may be prevented,

* Isa. XLIV, 22.

** Dial. II, 10, 76.

*** Dial. III, 1, 111.

**** Dial. III, 1, 111.

sins are remitted. The Psalmist says : "Dixi: Confitebor adversum me iniustitias meas Domino; et tu remisisti impietatem peccati mei."* Caesar adds, that "Dixi" is to be interpreted by "deliberavi."** By confession, the Christian not only confessed his sins, but also made known his faith and praised and glorified his Maker.*** Thus, to Caesar of Heisterbach, confession was the seal of true contrition, by which the soul was cured of its sins and led to reconciliation with God.

* Psal. XXXI, 5. Dial. III, 1, 110.

** Dial. III, 1, 110.

*** Dial. III, 1, 110.

II.

The priest appears regularly to have been qualified to be a confessor. But, he must, as a rule, only hear the confessions of those committed to his care.* For the people of a monastery, the proper confessor was the Abbot, and in his absence, the Prior.** When no priest was available, laymen seem to have been qualified to hear confession. Thus, Caesar tells the story of a knight who had reason to suspect that a certain priest had committed adultery with his wife. As it was the current belief in the thirteenth century that demons could reveal unconfessed sins, the knight asked the priest to go with him to a well known demoniac.*** When they approached the place, the priest grew uneasy and asked to be excused. He hastened to the servant of the knight who happened to be in a stable. The priest besought him to hear his confession, which the latter did. The demon later was unable to reveal the priest's sin.**** In a similar story, the servant of a knight, accompanying his master to a demoniac, saved himself on the way from revelation, by confessing to a woodcutter, while the knight slept near by.⁵

* Dial. III, 26, 143.

** Dial. III, 23, 139; III, 25, 142.

*** Lea, Confession and Indulgences, I, 221.

**** Dial, III, 2, 112.

⁵ Dial. III, 3, 113.

Again, Caesar relates the story of John Xantensis, who was present on a ship carrying crusaders. A furious storm arose and all expected death. Many began to confess to each other. It was found that the storm was caused by the gross sins of one of the company. When this one had confessed in the presence of all, the sea became quiet.*

Caesar pictures to us an ideal confessor. He ought to be God-fearing, prudent, learned, discreet, merciful, easy of access and always willing to hear confessions.** The confessor, however, did not always measure up to this ideal.*** Caesar is careful to state that the fear of God is by no means sufficient for a confessor, but that he also must have the ability to distinguish between venial and mortal sins, so that proper penance may be enjoined.**** He mentions one confessor who made no such distinction between sins, but enjoined on some the same penance his predecessor had imposed, and on others, renewed the penance they had done the year before, regardless of the gravity of their sins, or the manner they had performed their penance.⁵

Another confessor imposed the same penance on all

* Dial. III, 21, 136.

** Dial. III, 39, 159.

*** Dial III, 40, 160; III, 41, 161,;III, 42, 162.

**** Dial.III, 43, 163.

⁵ Dial,III, 44, 163.

his parishioners without respect to their sins.* There was one priest, whom Caesar calls learned enough but devoid of much reverence, who made one of his parishioners do penance for committing a certain sin, and another for not committing it. This priest was brought to justice. Caesar pours his righteous wrath on such priests. In the words of the prophets, the judgment of God has already been pronounced on such!**

He quotes Jeremiah VI, 12, 13: "Extendam manus meas super habitatores terrae; a minimo usque ad maximum, omnes student avaritiae; et a propheta usque ad sacerdotem, omnes faciunt dolum," and Ezekial XIII, 19: "Propter pugillum hordei, et fragmen panis violabant me ad populum meum, ut interficiant animas, quae non moriuntur, et vivificent quae non vivunt."

The Novice says that he has heard priests smooth over and dissimulate sins for a poultry-cock or a sixth measure of wine.** Caesar adds that he could illustrate by many stories the mischief which the priests brew in the confessional, but that religion, the order and sex must be spared.*** He gives only one example of a wicked confessor.**** On the other hand, the priest might be God-fearing and the penitent

* Dial, III, 45, 164.

** Dial, III, 41, 161.

*** Dial, III, 41, 162.

**** Dial. III, 42, 162.

confessing might tempt him to sin.*

It seems to have been the practice to give confessors presents. Thus, one priest threw the money offered him as a bribe to absolve after the briber.** Others offered poultry or wine.*** Sometimes the penance imposed required the reading of a certain number of masses. The money paid for these, the confessor took.****

Another confessor, instead of hearing the confession of each of his parishioners individually, made six or eight approach the altar at once. Then he had them repeat a confession he put into their mouth.⁵ The evil consequence of this practice was seen, when the successor of the foregoing confessor was called to administer the Lord's Supper to a man on his death bed. When the man was asked to make his confession, he told the confessor to make it for him. Inasmuch as the latter refused, the man made a long confession of sins, adultery, theft, murder, perjury, and summing up the whole list by saying "and many other crimes." The priest asked him whether he had committed all these sins. To this the man replied that he had

* Dial. III, 43, 163.

** Dial. III, 35, 156.

*** Dial. III, 41, 161.

**** Dial. III, 40, 160.

5 Dial, III, 45, 164.

not, but that he had made the confession from habit.*

The confessor was also to be intelligent and skillful in handling different cases of confession. A certain man came to a priest and confessed his sins. When ^{told him} the priest [^]to forsake his evil ways, he replied that he could confess, but that he could not leave his sins. Thereupon the priest refused to impose penance. Then the man offered the priest a coin as a bribe. This the priest took but threw it after the man, saying: "Pecunia tua tecum sit in perditionem." Frightened by the action and words of the priest, the man returned next day, confessed and had penance imposed.** This shows the value of a good confessor, for if he had not acted so wisely, the man might never have been saved. At another time, a woman came to a priest to confess. Kneeling before him she enumerated all the good she had ever done. When the priest asked, whether she had committed any sins, she said that she had not. Then he inquired what her business was. She replied she was accustomed to sell iron. He asked whether she ever adulterated her iron. When she replied in the affirmative, the priest said that this was a mortal sin. He further asked

* Dial. III, 45, 164.

** Dial. III, 35, 156.

whether she did not at times lie, swear falsely, curse her competitors, and envy those who sold more successfully than she did. She said that she was often guilty of such things. Then the priest told her that these were all mortal sins, and that unless she did penance she would surely go to Hell. Terrified at these words, she recognized her sins and learned what she ought to confess.* By such instances as these, the great value of an intelligent confessor is readily apparent.

The confessor must also interrogate the penitent concerning the circumstances of the sin. The manner of such questioning, Caesar says, is well explained in the Pastoral Regula of Gregory. The confessor must, however, be careful not to pollute the mind of the confessing penitent or teach him how to sin." A young girl made confession to a priest. The priest began to question her about sins she had never committed or even heard of before. Shortly afterwards, the girl was tempted by these sins, and as she confessed to another priest later, it was only after the severest struggle that she had overcome her temptation.** Nevertheless, Caesar says, the confessor must

* Dial. III, 46, 165.

** Dial. III, 47, 166.

be very solicitous about the sins of those confessing to him, and that he ought to arouse by word and example a desire in them to confess. A certain Abbot wished to know the conscience of a brother Abbot. So he made a general confession of his sins to him. Then he said to the other that he was willing to hear his confession also if he wished to make one. Being ashamed, he confessed.* Caesar relates another story in which an Abbot provokes confession by his example. A Abbot had ill-disciplined and dissolute monks. One day, the monks prepared a feast of meat which they ate in a hidden place. The Abbot informed of this, joined the monks in their feast. On the following day, in the Chapter meeting, the Abbot confessed to the prior that he had broken the rule in feasting with the monks. The monks followed his example and also confessed their sins.** Another tale illustrates the value of a skillful confessor. A certain notorious sinner did not wish to do penance, but as his confessor was prudent and discreet, he was induced to say one Lord's Prayer every day as penance. Soon the man came and asked for more penance. Finally, he did all the penance enjoined.***

* Dial. III, 48, 166.

** Dial. III, 49, 167.

*** Dial. III, 50, 168.

The confessor, as well as the penitent, was to maintain the secrecy of the confessional.* In the story already related of the crusaders who had confessed to each other during a violent storm, none of the party on landing remembered a single sin confessed.** Caesar says it is not wise to disclose the sinner, because the confessor might ever after despise him or even incur temptation by the revelation. He tells the story of a dying youth who in confessing gave the name of the person who had invited him to sin. From that time on, the confessor was not able to regard the disclosed person with the proper respect.*** In another story, we learn of a youth who had sinned with the concubine of a certain priest. The youth confessed to this priest and revealed the name of the concubine. The priest was much angered and imposed exceedingly heavy penance, out of all proportion to the sin committed.**** Caesar says that the confession ought to be so made as to conceal the person with whom sin is committed, but not the sin. The following story shows the evils which may arise

* Dial. III, 27, 145.

** Dial. III, 21, 136.

*** Dial. III, 28, 145.

**** Dial. III, 29, 146.

from not observing secrecy. An Abbot had a grievous fault. Through the confessional he learned that one of his monks was aware of his shortcoming. So he plotted to send the monk away to a remote monastery lest he should accuse him in the Visitation. But the monk refused to go. Thus, Caesar says, the Abbot was led to persecution and the monk to needless worry.*

Whenever the confessor was in doubt regarding his duties as a confessor, he was to refer his case to a superior. A certain Cistercian monk celebrated without orders. The Abbot learned this through the confession of the monk, but inspite of the Abbot's remonstrances, the monk refused to cease celebrating. So he brought the case before the General Chapter, but as the Abbots did not wish to rule in the matter, it was brought before Pope Innocent. The pope and the cardinals, inspite of the fact that the secrecy of the confessional was not to be violated, ruled **the confession ought to be made public,** that, inasmuch as it was not a confession but blasphemy through which the whole church might be endangered.** On the other hand, the penitent might do much good by revealing his associate in sin. A certain person tempted some

* Dial. III, 30, 147.

** Dial. III, 32, 149.

one to sin against his will. The name of the former was revealed in confession and in this way the confessor was able to lead the guilty one to repentance. Otherwise, the person might not have been saved, says Caesar.*

Thus, the priest was the regularly qualified person to hear confession. In order to be a good confessor, he must be, reverent, discreet and intelligent, diligently encouraging a desire to confess and wisely inquiring into the circumstances of sins. Furthermore, he must strictly observe the secrecy of the confessional.

* Dial. III, 37, 147.

III.

Certain characteristics were also demanded of confession itself. Since confession was one of the weapons by which the Christian waged war against sin, it was to be made willingly, quickly, and not delayed, reverently, completely, truthfully, and to the proper person.* Thus, in explaining the command in Matthew: "Vade, ostende te sacerdoti,"** Caesar says that in those four words the qualities most to be observed in confession are expressed, namely, "festinate," "nuda," "integra," and "debita".*** "Vade" is to be interpreted as signifying "cita", "festinata"; "ostende" as "nuda"; "te" as "integra"; and "sacerdoti" as "debita". Accordingly, "festinata" means that the sinner^{should} hasten and go without delay to confession, "nuda" requires him to show and unbare his whole life to the confessor, "integra" signifies that not only some sins but all sins be confessed, and "debita" requires that confession be made to the priest to whom it is owed.**** Caesar relates a story illustrating the importance of confessing to the priest to whom the confession is owed. A

* Dial. III, 1, 110-111.

** Matt. VIII, 4.

*** Dial. III, 1, 111.

**** Dial. III, 1, 111.

youth entered a monastery as a novice. He soon fell ill, and as he had not yet made the customary general confession he confessed to the Prior in the absence of the Abbot. One night, the Abbot, on his way to the monastery, before he had heard of the youth, had a vision in which the youth begged him to hear his confession. The youth was so contrite and wept so profusely that his tears dropped on the breast of the sleeping Abbot, over whom the novice was reclining in the vision. The novice said to the Abbot that he could not have been saved unless he had confessed to him. At this the Abbot awoke, wondering whether the vision was true, but upon finding the bed clothes wet he knew that he had not been deceived. Caesar says that by this vision God wished to show by the words and the acts of the youth, how important it was to confess to the proper person.* In another story we are informed that the confession made to another person than the proper one is worthless. In a certain monastery an Abbot had allowed a priest known for his good conduct to hear the confessions of his brother monks for some time. A young fellow often came to confess to him. One day both sinned in each others presence. The

* Dial. III, 25, 142.

priest ashamed to confess, suggested that they confess to each other. They did this. Not long after the priest died, and appeared to the youth in a vision , and told him of the great punishment he was suffering, that the confession they had made to each other was worthless, and that if he hadnot made some confession of his sins to his Abbot just before death, he would have been eternally damned.* Another story illustrates the fact that all sins ought to be confessed to one confessor and not some to one and others to another. There was a certain monk who often renewed or repeated the general confession he had made upon entering the monastery. One day, he became ill and dumb. When the Abbot came, through the mercy of God, says Caesar, his tongue was loosed and he confessed a sin, committed before conversion, which he had never confessed before. The Abbot disturbed at this, asked whether he had ever confessed this sin before. The monk replied thathe had done so to other Abbots, for his confession had been due to three other Abbots some time or other. When the Novice asks, what if the monk had similarly withheld certain sins from this Abbot, Caesar replies, that confession ought to include all the

* Dial. III, 24, 139.

sins ever committed, that these ought all to be confessed to the proper confessor and not divided among several.* Furthermore, confession ought not to be delayed to the last moment. Caesar highly commends the example of the English Praemonstratensian bishop who, just before his death, refused confession, because he had been in the habit of making confession often and had not delayed his confession to his deathbed.**

We have already been informed that confession ought to be made in a truthful spirit. But this was not always done. The novice asks, whether confession made with the intention of sinning again has any value. Caesar replied, that it is of little value, because God does not absolve from sin until the desire of sinning has been put away. When once the desire of sinning is given up, that follows which Micha VII, 19, says: "Deponet omnes iniquitates nostras, et proiciet in profundiam maris omnia peccata nostra." The practice of those, who before Easter seem to put away their sins through confession only to resume them shortly after is not to be commended.*** Finally,

* Dial. III, 23, 138.

** Dial. III, 22, 138.

*** Dial. III, 34, 155.

true confession can always be recognized when it is made with the sincere intention of doing penance.*

To the Novice's question, whether a written confession suffices when the penitent is able to speak, Caesar replies, that it does not seem to suffice, for by the mouth confession is made unto salvation. But those who have confessed may amplify their confession by written ones, as St. Augustine did in his Confessions and the Parisian Scholar, already referred to, when for compunction he was unable to speak.**

Thus confession was not to be delayed or divided among several confessors. It was to be made fully and to the proper confessor. Oral confession might be supplemented by a written confession.***

* Dial. III, 3, 114.

** Dial. III, 27, 144.

*** Dial. II , 10, 75.

IV.

The time for lay confession regularly occurred at Easter.* Confession also occurred at other times. Thus, the clerk confessed to the woodcutter in an emergency.** The sister of the clerk, about to be burned at the stake, makes her confession just before the burning.*** In the monastery, confession seems to have taken place at almost any time. Thus, a nun confesses at matins.*** The monk, tempted by the devil, makes his confession in the night, after awakening the Prior from sleep.⁵

Confession took place in the church before the altar. The confessor sat in a chair and the penitent kneeled before him.⁶ The people of a monastery generally confessed in the Chapter room.⁷ Nevertheless, confession might take place elsewhere, as is shown by the confession of the priest to the servant of the knight in the stable,⁸ that of the clerk to the woodcutter on the way to the demon,⁹

* Dial. III, 26, 143; III, 29, 146; III, 44, 163;
III, 45, 164; III, 46, 165; III, 52, 169.

** Dial. III, 3, 113.

*** Dial. III, 15, 130.

**** Dial. III, 13, 126.

⁵ Dial. III, 14, 127

⁶ Dial. II, 2, 59; II, 10, 75; III, 26, 143;
III, 45, 164; III, 52, 169.

⁷ Dial. III, 53, 170.

⁸ Dial. III, 2, 112.

⁹ Dial. III, 3, 113.

and the confession of the woman about to be burned at the stake.* Another man makes his confession on his deathbed.**

* Dial. III, 15, 130.

** Dial. III, 45, 164.

V.

Up to the beginning of thirteenth century, the teaching of the Church had not been definitely declared in regard to confession. Some held that contrition alone was sufficient for salvation, others claimed that confession was necessary. However, confession was made obligatory by the Lateran Council of 1215.* Henry Charles Lea, thus briefly summarizes the famous canon relating to confession: "It orders all the faithful of both sexes, after reaching years of discretion, to confess privately all their sins at least once a year to their own priests, and to endeavor, as far as their strength shall permit, to perform the penance imposed; also reverently to take communion, at least at Easter, unless for reasonable cause the priest advises postponement: otherwise ingress to the Church is to be refused to the living and Christian sepulture to the dead. This salutary statute, it proceeds, is to be published frequently in the churches, so that no one shall be able to plead ignorance of it. If any one has just cause to desire to confess to

* Lea, Confession and Indulgences, I, 227, 228.

another priest, he must obtain licence from his own, as otherwise no one else has power to bind or to loose. The priest must be discreet and prudent, so that like a skillful leech he may bathe with wine and oil the wounds of the wounded, diligently enquiring into the circumstances of the sinner and of the sin, whereby he may understand what counsel to give and what remedy to exhibit, using various experiments to cure the sick. But he must be specially careful not by word or sign in any way to betray the sinner, and if he is in need of wiser counsel he shall cautiously seek it without mentioning the sinner, for we decree that he who shall venture to reveal a sin known to him in the penitential judgment shall not only be deposed from the priestly office but shall be thrust into a rigid monastery to perform perpetual penance." *

Although Caesar nowhere in the Dialogus refers directly to the Lateran canon, it seems certain that he must have known of the canon. The Lateran Council met in 1215 and the Dialogus was written sometime from 1188

* Lea, Confession and Indulgences, I, 228.

to 1229.* Thus he had ample time to become familiar with the cannon. It was also ordered to be posted in the churches. Furthermore, Caesar's ideas about confession readily group themselves about the main articles of the cannon. Accord-

* Caesar of Heisterbach does not appear to have written the *Dialogus Miraculorum* at one time, but at intervals extending over almost thirty years. The earliest period that can be fixed approximately is 1188-1192. Caesar speaks of Lodewicus Lantgravus who died "ante hos duos annos" (*Dial. I, 27, 32*) Further on, he states that Lodewicus at his death left two sons Hermannus and Lodewicus, and that the latter died in the Crusade of Frederick Barbarossa, which occurred 1188-1192. Hence, the elder Lodewicus Lantgravus must have died sometime before 1188-1192. This would fix the earliest date of composition. The latest date is approximately 1229. Caesar enumerates three expeditions to the Holy Land, that of Frederick Barbarossa, that of Henry VI, and that of Frederick II, "tertia sub Frederico qui hodie imperat." (*Dial. X, 47, 250*). The Crusade of Frederick II took place 1228-1229. Thus, the *Dialogus* must have^{been} written at least as late as 1229.

ing , we find in the tales, that lay confession occurs at Easter, that confession must be made to the priest to whom it is due, that the confessor must be discreet and prudent, that he is to inquire into the circumstance of the sin, so as to apply the proper penance, and that the secrecy of the confessional is to be observed. More indirectly, the influence of the canon is also shown. Besides the emphasis Caesar lays on the importance of confession in the way of salvation, he also uses many opportunities to show the special advantages to be derived from confession.

Thus, confession was efficacious in many ways. There was a widespread belief in the Middle Ages that a demon or one possessed of a demon was able to disclose the secret sins of any one. However, nothing was so effective in rendering a demon powerless as confession, for when the sinner once had confessed, the demon no longer was able to uncover any hidden sins.* A demon accused a young girl before her mother. The accusation was confirmed by a friend of the mother. The girl confessed, and when she asked the demon in the presence of her mother, whether he had any charges to bring against her, he replied in the

* Dial. III, 2, 113; III, 3, 114.

negative. Thus, the demon lost his power of betrayal and the reputation of the girl was restored.* A certain monk was constantly worried by the devil, but as soon as the monk confessed, the devil ceased troubling him.** Confession might also aid in overcoming a powerful opponent. In the presence of the German Emperor in Lombardy, a skillful soldier, though not large, defeated a tall, powerful man. The small man conquered through the efficacy of confession.*** Caesar also appears to suggest that confession may be of value to the dead. Thus, a priest dead for some time appears in a vision to a youth with whom he had sinned, and tells him that if the latter would make a complete and truthful confession, it would benefit him much.**** A thief by making a confession escapes a sentence of death.⁵ A young clerk, well educated and reared, became ashamed of his parents when they were reduced to want. As they had no church office to bestow on him, he conceived the plan of robbing a goldsmith. In this deed, he was

* Dial. III, 6, 119.

** Dial. III, 14, 127.

*** Dial. III, 18, 134.

**** Dial. III, 24, 139.

⁵ Dial. III, 19, 35.

helped by his sister. The goldsmith was waylaid and murdered by the clerk. The clerk and his sister were condemned to be burned at the stake. The girl , just before the last moment, asked for a priest, and confessed, but the clerk despairing, refused. The fire did not in the least injure the girl , so she was released. This was due to the wonderful efficacy of confession.* In Cambray, several heretics were caught and sentenced to be burned. One of them of noble blood was exhorted to repentance. A priest was called, to whom he confessed. As he was a branded heretic, the brand in his hand disappeared when his confession was completed.** This was also a sign of the power of confession. Caesar relates the story of two merchants who were advised by their confessor to conduct their business without lying and swearing. They tried this for a while with the wonderful result that they became very rich. Caesar adds, that such signal instances of the benefit of confession ought to be preached in the churches to the merchants.*** By these stories the influence of the Lateran canon relating to confession is shown in the Dialogus. Caesar wrote these stories to popularize confession.

* Dial. III, 15, 130.

** Dial. III, 16, 132; III, 17, 133.

*** Dial. III, 37, 157.

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Professor of European History

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